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SUBJECT: EU TELLS PRESIDENT ISAIAS HE IS KEY TO STABILITY
IN HORN

REF: STATE 59532

Classified By: Political Officer Vincent Carver for
Reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (C/NF) Summary: European Commissioner Louis Michel met May 4 with Eritrean President Isaias to stress Eritrea's role in promoting regional peace and stability. Michel delivered a harder message during a separate one-on-one meeting in which he expressed EU displeasure with Eritrean violations of human rights and Vienna Convention obligations, according to Michel's staff. Isaias reportedly said Eritrea will not support the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) in Somalia to the point of creating "Iraq-like" sectarian violence. When Isaias mentioned his poor relations with the U.S., Michel said he should be aware that the U.S. is Europe's closest partner. End summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Roger Moore, Commission Director for the Horn of Africa and East and Southern Africa, told us May 4 that the EU's general message to Isaias was that he is respected and counted on to play a role of peacebuilder and statesman in resolving regional problems. The Commission believes that, like him or not, Isaias should be courted because of his importance in the region. Moore said Isaias acts like a child who stamps his feet and throws a tantrum if he believes he is not being respected. The EU therefore has decided to engage him and cooperate to the extent possible in the hopes of improving the political and humanitarian situation in Somalia and other parts of the Horn. The problems of human rights abuses, Vienna Convention violations, and other troubling actions by the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) outlined in reftel were discussed in a separate private meeting between Isaias and Michel, Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Assistance, so as not to embarrass Isaias in front of others, Moore said.

¶3. (C/NF) Isaias told Michel that he does not want to be a spoiler in the region and will not continue to back the CIC in Somalia to the point of creating sectarian violence like that seen in Iraq, according to Moore. Isaias recommended that Western and other interested countries articulate a plan for what they want in Somalia, including whether they support physical division of the country or unity at all costs, and

what exactly is meant by statements expressing the need for the TFG to be inclusive. Moore said the EU was impressed by Isaias's analysis of Somalia, which he characterized as "not far from ours."

¶4. (C/NF) Isaias told the EC he has great difficulties in relations with the U.S. Michel told Isaias that the U.S. is Europe's closest partner and that Isaias should take that into account when deciding how to proceed with the U.S., Moore said.

¶5. (C/NF) The EC also discussed renewed development cooperation with Isaias. Moore said last year's food confiscation issue resulted from a misunderstanding on the GSE's part that the EC would only support food-for-work and not cash-for-work when, in fact, the EC does support cash-for-work exchanges. After a series of such missteps in the past year, including cancellation of a 45 million euro road project, development cooperation between the EU and Eritrea is now back on track, Moore said. Cabinet-level representatives from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Djibouti met in Brussels April 23 to discuss development cooperation. Moore said the meeting was at times contentious, but mostly cooperative, and can perhaps evolve into a forum for discussing broader regional issues in the future.

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